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In its critical comments the book is by no means notable. Mr. Plowman's remarks about Pre-Raphaelite painters, for example, or about the defects of the Victorian educational system, are neither very novel nor very acute; but all that is said is said sensibly and entertainingly, and nothing in this book of Mr. Plowman's comes amiss.

THE REAL FRONT. By Arthur Hunt Chute. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1918.

One of the grimmest of the war-books—a book with an emphatic message for stay-at-homes—is *The Real Front*, by Arthur Hunt Chute, late of the first Canadian Division. The book is by no means pessimistic. On the contrary, it should be to a stout heart inspiring—and only stout hearts receive the best inspiration. But it reveals horror with few softening touches, and it tells the bare facts of fighting without diverting attention to the thrill of successful accomplishment or wrapping up death and destruction in general terms.

From first to last the book gives facts without glamour. Very realistic is the description of the first Canadian contingent on its way to the front—a rough, disorderly set of men, surely, reduced to soldierly obedience only by the sternest discipline, for a willingness to die for the right cause does not instantaneously produce in the mind of the recruit a due respect for authority. No less realistic is the account that Mr. Chute gives of the heroic services performed by these same troops in the field. The author in no way idealizes these Canadian soldiers; he simply tells the facts: and the facts speak volumes both for the splendid qualities of the men themselves and for the mighty, the well-nigh irresistible force of discipline.

It is on the real front that manhood is tested and that the results of discipline are gloriously proved. The real front does not mean merely the trenches; it means the front-line trenches in time of battle. "One might visit the fire-trenches many times," writes Mr. Chute, "and yet never see the real front. The real front is the battle front, which comes and goes. 'Why, there is nothing to dread in the war game,' I announced, grandly, on our first night out. 'I've been at the front in the Balkans and now in France, and I surprise myself at how little of a coward I really am.' That was before I had ever seen the real front. One day, that quiescent volcano on which I had been dwelling suddenly burst into eruption. Out of the trembling earth and the belching fire and smoke, I found that I was still human. My tongue went dry and my knees knocked together, and I found that the real front is a place of mortal terror."

Even the experienced soldier may fail to realize the full meaning of the work that he does or the full measure of the fortitude that may at any time be required of him. As an artilleryman, Mr. Chute did his work methodically with little more than general thought of the results; but after he had had the nightmare trial of wallowing for hours in a shell-hole in the midst of a bombardment, he obtained a new comprehension of the whole sanguinary business of war. Than Mr. Chute's account of this experience nothing could better show the greatness of

the victory that even a brave man has to win over himself in order to endure unflinchingly the frightfulness of a modern battle. One can appreciate the mood of the author when he calls the big shells "angels of death," and one can understand the frame of mind of that Ghirwali trooper who, when one of these death-dealing missiles had exploded near him, killing his companions, threw himself upon his knees with head bowed to the earth—the attitude assumed by Easterners in extreme devotion.

Some of the happenings related by Mr. Chute are such as we do not readily conceive for ourselves and such as most warbooks hardly do more than mention. "A piece was put out of action," we read, perhaps, in the report of a battle. Mr. Chute shows us the effect of a direct hit upon an artillery emplacement. The armor-piercing shell bursts through the gun pit, detonates on the gun, and blows every one of the artillerymen to pieces. The author brings before us and calls by name the signal men who are to go out and reestablish broken communications during a battle. None of them returns. He shows us the sentry, compelled to remain at his post at a time when the springing of a mine is expected, engulfed in the awful explosion.

Mr. Chute, it may be seen, does not spare the feelings of his readers. Yet his real intention is not, of course, merely to shock. What he has to tell us of that lightness of heart which prevails among the soldiers despite all that they see and suffer, about the "soldierly spirit" that conquers all obstacles, and about the firm faith that the soldier finds to sustain him through the most soul-shaking crises, is all the more effective because of the reality and detail with which he describes the scenes of war and because of the frankness with which he portrays fighting as something quite other than an exciting game. "The light heart in the midst of danger and tribulation is our last invincible defense. . . . The greatest faith in the world . . . is found in the front-line trenches."

Nor is the soldier's faith an emotional reaction, an indirect effect of fear. On the contrary, it is associated with fearlessness, obedience, self-sacrifice. Much has been said of the moral effect of the war upon the fighting man. Are we justified in hoping that moral regeneration will come out of this terrible conflict? Mr. Chute's testimony on this point is unusually explicit. "Boys," he says, "who at home seemed worthless cads, at the front show forth the most godlike bravery and devotion."